

MEDIA STATEMENT

14 December 2017

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE ROYAL COMMISSION

Indigenous Young People Are The Most Vulnerable In The Care Sector, Have Faced Systematic Cover Ups And Institutionalised Sexual Abuse

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children continue to be over-represented in the out-of-home care population, and are therefore among the most vulnerable children in Australia according to CREATE Foundation CEO Jacqui Reed.

Ms Reed made her comments in light of tomorrow's handing down of the final recommendations from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

“Aboriginal children face heightened risks of institutional sexual abuse. We know this from the Bringing Them Home report and the Commission’s own report released earlier this year”, Ms Reed said.

“The Commission’s own report noted that years of colonialist and racist policies have led to systematic cover-ups and institutionalised sexual abuse of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children”.

“Indigenous children and young people are ten times more likely to enter out-of-home care than non-Indigenous children and young people and eleven times more likely to be in out-of-home care if aged under 9 years than their non-Indigenous peers” she said.

At the same time, evidence shows that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are less likely to be placed with kin or family, than non-indigenous children, with only two thirds of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children placed with family members, “Ms Reed said.

Ms Reed also pointed out that the recent Family Matters report suggests that unless action is taken now, there will be a **threefold increase** in the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children removed into care.

“With the findings of the Royal Commission being handed down this week, it’s time for bipartisan support for long term positive outcomes” Ms Reed said. “Years of reports and Inquires tells us the same thing - we must move toward creating **culturally safe services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children**, or risk repeating and increasing the poor outcomes that led to this Royal Commission in the first place. Let’s focus on that today. Let’s create practical outcomes. Let’s stop history from repeating itself.”

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Statistics

At 30 June 2016, there were 16,846 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in out of home care, a rate of 56.6/1000, compared with 15,455 (52.6/1000) in 2015 (AIHW, 2016).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander children are:

- 7 times more likely to receive a child protection service than their non-Indigenous peers;
- 10 times more likely to enter out-of-home care than non-Indigenous children and young people;
- 11 times more likely to be in out-of-home care if aged under 9 years than their non-Indigenous peers;

Only 66% of Indigenous children were placed with relatives/kin, other Indigenous caregivers or in Indigenous residential care, even following the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle; this percentage is similar to that reported in previous years (AIHW, 2016).

Nationally, all states and territories saw an increase in the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out of home care. In 2015, there were 15,455 indigenous children and young people in out of home care in Australia. In 2016, this has increased to 16,846.

For more information on CREATE, please visit our website at www.create.org.au

For further comment from CREATE's CEO Jacqui Reed and/or a young person with care experience please call Andrea Doney 0402050418 and andrea@admarcoms.com.au

ENDS

Key statistics on the care sector in Australia:

- 46,488 children were in out-of-home care across Australia at 30 June, 2016
- 35% of young people experience homelessness within the first year of leaving care
- 46% of boys with care experience have had contact with the juvenile justice system
- 29% of young people who have experienced out-of-home care are unemployed
- 36% of children and young people are split from their brothers and sisters in care
- 35% of young people in care have 5 or more caseworkers during their time in care
- 67% of young people in care are not aware of leaving care plans

